

WHAT ARE FOOD STAMP BENEFITS?

The Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income individuals buy nutritious food needed for good health. Food stamp benefits are the primary form of food assistance and aid families who are in need by providing benefits to purchase nutritional foods.

A person doesn't have to be on public assistance to receive food stamp benefits. In fact, an individual can have a job and be eligible. Many food stamp participants are people who have temporarily fallen on tough times. For example, they are working families, children, single parents, citizens or eligible immigrants, elderly or disabled individuals who need some type of assistance to stretch their monthly income.

SPENDING YOUR FOOD STAMP BENEFITS

Food stamp benefits can only be used for purchasing food or plants and seeds to grow food for your household to eat.

Food stamp benefits cannot be used to buy:

- Any nonfood item, such as pet food, soaps, paper products, etc.;
- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco;
- Vitamins and medicines;
- Any food eaten in the store; and
- Hot foods.

Benefits are not to be used to pay off existing grocery accounts or to purchase food for non-household members.

Sales tax is not charged on items bought with food stamp benefits.

WHO IS COUNTED AS PART OF MY HOUSEHOLD?

In most cases, a household is an individual or a group of people who buy, prepare, and eat food together.

CAN I HAVE INCOME AND STILL GET FOOD STAMP BENEFITS?

Yes, income can come from sources such as a job, child support payments, unemployment benefits, or a pension. The amount of income you can have and still get food stamp benefits depends on the number of people in your household. Your gross monthly income, before deductions, must be less than the amounts listed below:

Household size:	Maximum gross monthly income:**
1	\$1,037
2	\$1,390
3	\$1,744
4	\$2,097
5	\$2,450
6	\$2,803
7	\$3,156
8	\$3,509
Each additional member	+ \$354

** These amounts are effective October 2005.
Amounts will change October 1, 2006.

If your gross monthly income is under the limit, a food stamp worker will figure your net income (income after deductions) to determine if you are eligible for food stamp benefits. Deductions include expenses such as day care costs, medical bills (if you are over 59 or are disabled), and some shelter costs. Elderly and disabled people with more income may be eligible due to large medical expenses. SSI and Temporary Assistance households may be eligible with more income. If you think you may be eligible, contact your local Family Support Division (FSD) office.

WHAT KIND OF PROPERTY CAN I OWN?

Some items that you own are counted in figuring eligibility and some are not.

Items NOT counted are:

- A home you are living in;
- Personal belongings;
- Cash value of life insurance policy; and
- Vehicles.

Items that WILL be counted are:

- Cash on hand; and
- Savings and checking accounts.

All of your counted property is added together and the total must be less than \$2,000. If your household has one member who is 60 years of age or older or is disabled, you can have up to \$3,000 in counted property.

HOW CAN I APPLY?

You can pick up an application either in English or translated in Spanish, at your local Family Support Division (FSD) office or you can request an application be mailed to you. You may download an application at www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/fstamp/index.htm. You may return the application in person, by mail, or you may fax the application to your local FSD office. If you cannot get to the office, you may ask someone you trust to apply for you. That person is called your **Authorized Representative**.

Once your application has been filed you may be interviewed by phone or in person. You will hear about your eligibility for food stamp benefits within 30 days.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING WHEN I APPLY?

- Identification -- showing your name and address.
- Proof of income -- the last two month's paycheck stubs or an official statement of the amount and frequency of payment, if employed.
- Medical bills -- if you are 60 years of age or older, or if you are disabled.
- Proof of legal immigrant status for each non-citizen for whom you are applying. If you choose not to provide status of an individual in your household, you will not receive food stamp benefits for that individual.
- Social Security Number (SSN) for each household member for whom you are applying. If you choose not to provide an SSN of an individual in your household, you will not receive food stamp benefits for that individual.

YOU MAY ALSO BE ASKED TO PROVIDE:

- Bank book or current bank statement;
- Receipts for child care or the care of other dependents who cannot care for themselves; and
- Utility bills and rent receipts.

WHAT IF I HAVE NO MONEY AND CAN'T WAIT 30 DAYS?

In some emergency cases, you can get food stamp benefits in seven days or less. A

decision about emergency benefits is made when you are interviewed.

NOTICE

If your application is denied or not acted upon with reasonable promptness, or after approval your benefits are reduced or discontinued, or you believe we have not followed the Food Stamp Law and Regulations, you may ask for a hearing. Your caseworker will help you file an appeal.

CIVIL RIGHTS LAW

In accordance with Federal Law and U. S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability.

Any person who believes s/he may have been the object of such discrimination may file a written complaint with the County office, the Family Support Division, or with the United States Department of Agriculture, giving the specific details as to how and when the discrimination took place. Send complaints to the Office of Civil Rights, P. O. Box 1527, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

For more information, contact your local Family Support Division office.

Missouri Department of Social Services
P. O. Box 1527
Jefferson City, MO 65102

To file a complaint of discrimination write:

USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights
Room 326-W, Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, S. W.
Washington, DC 20250-9410
or call (voice and TDD): (202) 720-5964

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MISSOURI'S FOOD STAMP PROGRAM
